

Dear 7th grade parent or guardian,

In order to promote 21st century skills in the classroom, the 7th grade English class has the opportunity to use Gamestar Mechanic ([gamestarmechanic.com](http://gamestarmechanic.com)) in our final storytelling unit. Gamestar Mechanic, an award-winning game design platform for children ages 7-14, teaches students to think like video game designers by allowing them to play and edit games in “quest” levels that teach them about the essential game design principles of space, components, mechanics, rules, and goals. Learning through video games teaches students to think systematically, persist through challenges and failure, take calculated risks and vary their performance based on feedback (Gee 2005). In the classroom, we will use Gamestar Mechanic to meet educational goals relevant to our study of storytelling. As a class, we will:

- Define vocabulary relevant to game design
- Analyze video games for narrative elements including mood, characterization, setting, conflict, resolution, cause-effect, point of view, pacing, and visual transitions.
- Identify and use the tools game designers use to tell stories (backgrounds, cutscenes, music, characters, level descriptions, intro screens, outro screens).
- Compare and contrast video game narratives to print narratives.
- Write engaging narratives and support them with relevant visual storytelling.

These classroom activities align with Common Core Standards, AASL Standards for the 21st Century Learner, and Maryland Technology Standards.

In order to maintain student privacy and safety, students will receive a secure link to login to [gamestarmechanic.com](http://gamestarmechanic.com) from their teacher, and upon registration will be added to the classroom account. Students will not need to provide email addresses to the site in order to register. While the tool has social networking features, these will be disabled in our classroom account. Please see the attached privacy policy for a more detailed explanation of privacy on the site.

You and your child are required to review the privacy policy and for Gamestar Mechanic and sign the attached permission slip to provide consent to participate in the unit. Please review the above information and permission slip below, and feel free to contact either Ms. Hamm or Ms. Shanahan with any additional questions about the wiki project. We look forward to working with your child on this collaborative learning experience.

Best,

Sereena Hamm  
7th grade English Teacher  
[shamm1@umd.edu](mailto:shamm1@umd.edu)

Katie Shanahan  
Middle School Librarian  
[kmshana@umd.edu](mailto:kmshana@umd.edu)

Please review the below permission slip and return no later than May 23, 2011.

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We have reviewed Gamestar Mechanic's privacy policy and consent to  
\_\_\_\_\_ (student name) participating in the unit.

**Parent/ Guardian Signature:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Student Signature:**

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Thank you for your support of our unit. -- Ms. Hamm and Ms. Shanahan